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| AUTHOR | Davis, Robert; Sproull, Lee |
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ABSTRACT

The National Institute of Education (NIE), a Federal agency started in August, 1972, is concerned primarily with educational research and development. Before NIE was actually established, a Planning Unit within the U.S. Office of Education generated many papers on what the objectives, activities, and organizational structure of NIE should be. In outline form, this planning paper 1) identifies conditions which are an indication of a lack of educational quality; 2) specifies development procedures for improving those conditions; 3) points out fundamental issues behind the lack of educational quality; and 4) specifies development procedures for creating those conditions necessary to improve educational quality. (Author/RM)

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Improving The Quality of Education:
An Outline. Robert Davis & Lee
Sproull. August, 1971.

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August, 1971

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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I. Inquiry into the meaning of Quality

A. Bob Davis' definition of quality

(Including his spirit and commitment; making reference to the fact that quality includes an enhancing of human dignity and an enabling of human endeavor)

B. Symptoms of a "lack of satisfactory quality"

(Which seem to cluster into seven areas, and which can provide insight into the nature of the fundamental problems. Most or all of the points listed here interact; they do not operate independently. They are listed separately only for the purpose of analysis: it would be possible to address programs to any one of the symptoms, but if no attempt were made to address all of the symptoms, little significant improvement in the quality of education would result.)

1. Unsatisfactory milieu, in the sense of not providing an atmosphere of humaneness, respect, consideration, emotional warmth, acceptance and dignity

2. Unsatisfactory milieu, in the sense of not developing a student's competence and confidence (not helping children develop autonomy, independence, the ability to schedule their time well, the ability to select appropriate problems to work on and to devise their own methods of attacking these problems, not helping children arrive at a realistic appraisal of their own competence, developing self-confidence)

3. Lack of authenticity of the content to be learned

4. Unreasoned or unreasonable selection of the content to be learned ( not teaching those "subjects" which might be appropriate for today's society or overemphasizing those subjects which may not be so appropriate)
5. Limited repertoires in schools, in curricula, in teaching styles
6. Limited conceptualizations of growth, learning, and educational institutions. ("schools of thought" or "models" of education ~~of education~~ tend to narrow a person's vision.)
7. Unenlightened ways of doing business
   (Including funding and evaluation procedures on the part of the federal government; evaluation procedures on the part of local supervisors; decision-making procedures at all levels)
   (The implications for the NIE organizational planning are enormous: Bob Davis is going to write a separate document dealing solely and specifically with this issue.)

II. Responses to the symptoms or problems listed above

The goal of this effort is to identify and specify development procedures for ameliorating those conditions which are an indication of a lack of quality.

A. Milieu, in the sense of humaneness

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. Secure a study of the literature on this aspect of milieu

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake to improve this aspect of milieu.

c. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area.

b. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

c. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

d. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

B. Milieu, in the sense of competence and confidence

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. Secure a study of the literature on this aspect of milieu

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake to improve this aspect of milieu

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area

b. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

c. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

d. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

C. Genuineness of the content to be learned

1. Objectives by December, 1971

None

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a study of schools, textbooks, and courses of study in selected areas

b. Secure a preliminary survey of current best practice

c. Design programs, aimed at various population groups, to determine needs

[illegible]

d. Develop a list of possible programs to improve this aspect of quality

D. Selection of the content to be learned

1. Objectives by December, 1971.

a. Secure a partial survey of the current best practice

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake to improve selection of the content to be learned

c. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objective for June, 1972

a. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

b. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

c. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

E. Diversified repertoires in schools, curricula, teaching styles, etc.

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake to increase diversified repertoires

c. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed programs

b. Indicate priority recommendations among progosed programs

c. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

F. Expanded conceptualizations of growth, and learning

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. None

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a study of the literature in this area

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake in this area

G. Enlightened ways of doing business

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. Secure a partial survey of the current best practice

b. Develop a list of possible programs that NIE might undertake in this area

c. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objectives for June, 1972

a. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

b. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

c. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

III. An attempt to identify underlying or fundamental issues

There seem to be three issues on which the question of lack of quality centers.

A. Isolation

(In all its manifestations: students from adults, from older and younger kids, from the real world; teachers from other teachers, from academicians, from the local community; schools from other schools, communities, business)

B. Sameness

(Most schools or education programs in this country are very similar. Even experimental or alternative schools or programs are similar.)

C. Piece-meal nature of reform

(Programs aimed at a single problem or symptom are often weakened because they fail to consider the total environment of the problem.)

IV. Responses to the fundamental issues identified above

The goal of this effort is to identify and specify development procedures for creating those conditions necessary to improve educational quality.

A. Interaction

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. List development programs that NIE might undertake to improve interaction in education

b. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area

b. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

c. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

d. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

B. Diversity

1. Objectives by December, 1971

a. List development prpgrams that INE might undertake to improve diversity in education

b. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Ojbectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area

b. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed solutions

c. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

d. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs

C. Comprehensive nature of reform

1. Objectives by December, 1972

a. List programs that NIE might undertake to facilitate the comprehensive nature of reform

b. Build a rationale for the programs listed

2. Objectives by June, 1972

a. Secure a preliminary survey of the existing best practice in this area

b. Indicate feasibility of and constraints to success of proposed programs

c. Indicate priority recommendations among proposed programs

d. Describe specifications for selected proposed programs